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Woman leaves \$1M to Rocky Mountain Nature Association

By Pamela Dickman
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A nature lover has left a \$1 million estate to the Rocky Mountain Nature Association.

Carol Braun, a volunteer for the association, willed money and her Estes Park home to the association, the nonprofit partner to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Braun loved the park in life, and now in death, she will help future generations learn about and love the national park.

Her home will be used to house student interns.

“That’s a very significant gift in itself,” said Heidi Buchholtz, administrative assistant for the Nature Association.

“Then whatever is left, \$800,000 or whatever it turns out to be, will go a long ways toward the endowment.”

Curt Buchholtz, executive director of the nonprofit, plans to recommend that the money portion of the gift go to the Next Generation Endowment to pay for programs that inspire future generations to love, respect and protect nature.

The Nature Association has raised \$2.6 million toward its goal of \$10 million for the endowment, including a portion of \$3 million willed to the association last year by a couple who also loved the national park.

Braun worked transcribing medical records in Kansas City, Mo, when, in 1992, she visited Colorado to experience the mountains for the first time.

Braun fell in love with the area and in 2003 arranged to work from home and moved to Estes Park to be near the national park.

Braun, who died from cancer in December at age 51, had volunteered at the national park and with the nature association and truly enjoyed the trails and taking pictures of the scenery.

“She just had a really deep appreciation of the beauty of this place,” said Nancy Wilson, special projects manager for the Nature Association.